



Looking north along Sylvia state beach; Sengekontacket Pond is on the left and Nantucket Sound is on the right side of photo. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

SECTION 11. JOSEPH A. SYLVIA STATE BEACH

11.1. INTRODUCTION

Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach is located in the towns of Oak Bluffs and Edgartown. (Figure 11.1) Access is via Beach Road, a state highway.

Sylvia is situated on an approximately 2.2 mile long stretch of barrier beach that ranges in width from approximately 200 to 1,050 feet. The state highway runs the entire length of the park, effectively dividing it into two sections. East of the highway is the high-use side, with roadside parking, dunes, and a bathing beach. To the west are the more protected back dunes, salt marsh, and the shore of Sengekontacket Pond, a protected embayment with rich shellfish beds.

State Beach, as Sylvia was originally known, was established in 1946 when the Massachusetts Legislature authorized the Commissioner of Conservation to “take by eminent domain...or acquire by purchase or otherwise” 100 acres in Oak Bluffs and Edgartown for public beach purposes. (Chapter 510 of the Acts of 1946) This enabling legislation specified that the Commissioners of the County of Dukes County were “authorized and directed to manage and maintain all property

acquired hereunder, and the cost of said management and maintenance shall be borne by said county.” Legislation authorizing expansion of the park also had this provision. (Chapter 631 of the Acts of 1954) As a result, Sylvia has always been a state park managed by the County.

In 1968, State Beach was renamed in honor of Joseph A. Sylvia, a former member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives who was instrumental in having the Commonwealth acquire the property.

In 1975 the park was used as a filming location for the movie *Jaws*; the beach and South Inlet to Sengekontacket Pond were featured prominently in that film. The bridge that links Edgartown to Oak Bluffs remains known as “Jaws Bridge.”

Today, Sylvia is best known for its sandy beach on the relatively warm and calm waters of Nantucket Sound. Its physical, political, and regulatory attributes are summarized below. (Table 11.1.1)

Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach

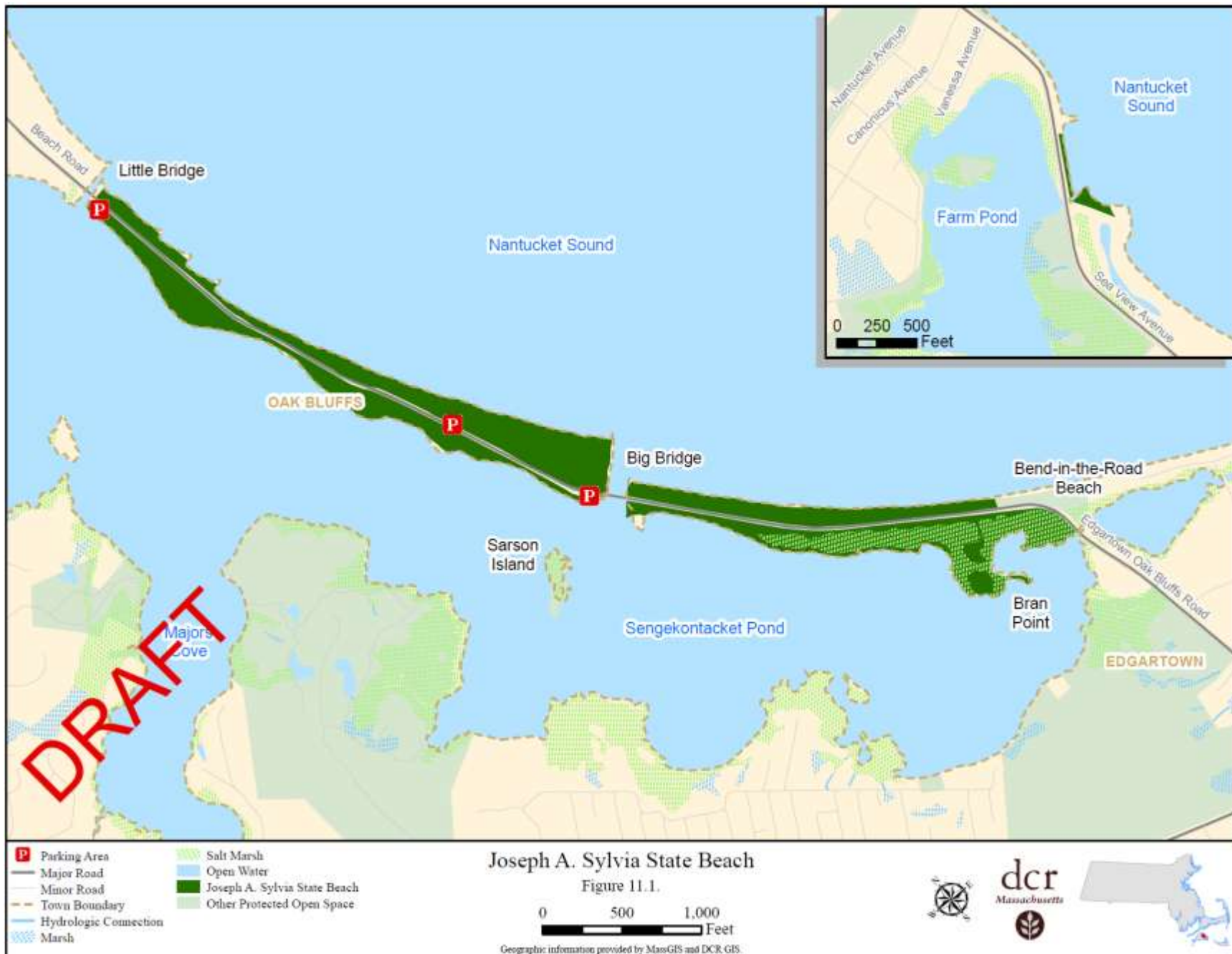


Table 11.1.1. Physical, political, and regulatory settings of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Setting	Name or Metric
Location:	Edgartown, Oak Bluffs
Area (acres)^a:	120.68
Perimeter (miles)^a:	9.20
Landscape Designation(s)^b:	Parkland
Legislative Districts:	
House	Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket
Senate	Cape and Islands
Regulatory Designations:	Priority Habitat

a. Calculated using a Geographic Information System (GIS).

b. For a summary of DCR's landscape designations, see <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/ld/ld-factsheet-final.pdf>.

Associated Properties. A disjunct parcel of Sylvia state beach is located opposite Farm Pond at 174 Sea View Way, Oak Bluffs; it is almost entirely sub-tidal.

There are operational connections between Sylvia and all DCR properties on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. The staff of Correllus serves as the point of contact for the County of Dukes County's operation of Sylvia state beach. They are also responsible for Correllus (Section 10), South Beach State Park (Section 12), and Nantucket State Forest (Section 13), and assisting Bureau of Fire Control and Forestry personnel with the management of the West Tisbury Fire Tower property (Section 15).

11.2. NATURAL RESOURCES

Physical Features

Elevations range from sea level at Nantucket Sound and Sengekontacket Pond to approximately 10 feet above sea level. Erosion rates have been estimated as ranging between 3 to 10 feet per year (MassHighway 1997). Information on sediment transport is presented in MassHighway (1997).

Water Resources

Sylvia has extensive salt and brackish water resources, with approximately 11,000 feet of frontage on Nantucket Sound and 14,000 feet of frontage on Sengekontacket Pond, a tidally dominated embayment with two openings into Nantucket Sound. It lacks freshwater resources. (Table 11.2.1)

Table 11.2.1. Water resources of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Water Resource	Name or Metric
Watershed:	Islands
Aquifer:	Martha's Vineyard SSA
Lens	N/A
Rivers and Streams (miles)	0.0
Vernal Pools	
Certified (#)	0
Potential (#)	0
Wetlands (acres)	19.29
Lakes and Ponds (acres)^a	18.49

a. This metric includes portions of Sengekontacket Pond and Nantucket Sound.

Sengekontacket Pond is impaired by wastewater based nitrogen loading. An assessment of the amount of nitrogen contributed to the pond, by source, is presented in Howes et al. (2011). The Sylvia state beach sub-watershed contributes approximately 0.115 kg of nitrogen per day, about 0.3% of the daily total, to the Sengekontacket Pond system. Additional information on the ecology of this pond may be found in Gaines (1995).



View across Sengekontacket Pond. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

Sylvia is highly susceptible to flooding, storm surge, and sea-level rise. The entire property is within the 100-year flood zone. A Category 1 hurricane is predicted to inundate much of the property, closing the road. (Table 11.2.2) A Category 3 storm would inundate everything but the American Legion Memorial Bridge (i.e., Big Bridge) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial Bridge (i.e., Little Bridge). Although a one foot rise in sea-level is predicted to impact all of the shoreline, the greatest

flooding is predicted to occur in the marsh and other low-lying areas near Bran Point.

Table 11.2.2. Potential impacts of flooding, hurricane inundation, and sea-level rise to Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Type of Impact	Acres	%
Flooding:		
100-year Storm	120.68	100.00
500-year Storm ^a	120.68	100.00
Hurricane Inundation:		
Category 1 Storm	75.58	62.63
Category 2 Storm ^b	99.78	82.68
Category 3 Storm ^b	102.90	85.27
Category 4 Storm ^b	102.91	85.28
Sea Level Rise	47.22	39.13

- a. Cumulative value; includes 100-year storm impacts.
 b. Cumulative value; includes impacts of all lower category storms.



Predicted hurricane inundation of Sylvia state beach. Areas predicted to be inundated by Category 1 storms are represented in light green; Category 2 storms in dark green; Category 3 storms in yellow; and Category 4 storms in red. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

There are two barrier beaches; Ob-1 in Oak Bluffs, and Et-1 in Edgartown. These barrier beaches run the entire length of the park.

Rare Species

State-listed Species

Five state-listed species are known from the state beach. (Table 11.2.3)

Table 11.2.3. State-listed species of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach, as identified by the NHESP.^{a, b}

Species ^{a, b}	Type ^c	MESA ^d
Barn owl	B	SC
Common tern	B	SC
Least tern	B	SC
Piping plover	B	T
Roseate tern ^e	B	E

- a. Presented alphabetically, by common name.
 b. Fact sheets are available at:
<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/species-information-and-conservation/mesa-list/list-of-rare-species-in-massachusetts.html>.
 c. Types of state-listed species include: B = Bird.
 d. Status of species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA): E = Endangered, SC = Special Concern; and T = Threatened.
 e. This species is also federally endangered.

One federally threatened species, the red knot, has been recorded on nearby Sarson Island, within Sengekontacket Pond (www.ebird.org). They likely also use the shoreline of Sylvia state beach. This species is not yet listed under MESA.

Priority Habitat

Nearly the entire property (95.64%) has been designated Priority Habitat under MESA.

Vegetation

There have been no comprehensive surveys of the flora of Sylvia. However, studies of Sengekontacket Pond and Edgartown-Oak Bluffs Road have provided generalized descriptions of the vegetation.

The park's dunes are characterized by American beach grass, beach pea, dusty miller, seaside goldenrod, poison ivy, beach heather, and evening primrose (MassHighway 1997, Woods Hole Group 2008). Shrubs including northern bayberry, beach plum, rugosa rose, and eastern red cedar are present in the more sheltered, landward sections of the dunes (Woods Hole Group, Inc. 2008).

The saltmarsh portion of the park is characterized by saltwater cordgrass and salt meadow hay (MassHighway 1997).

Hollow green weed, sea lettuce, rockweed, green fleece, and hollow-stemmed kelp are present on hard substrates, such as the stone groins (MassHighway 1997).

Invasive Species

Only one invasive species has been documented. (Table 11.2.4)

Table 11.2.4. Known invasive and likely invasive plants of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Species ^a	Status ^b
Spotted knapweed	I

a. Presented alphabetically, by common name.

b. Plants are classified as being either Invasive (I) or Likely Invasive (L) according to MIPAG (2005).

Natural Communities

There have been no formal surveys of natural communities. However, preliminary identification has been made of some community types. (Table 11.2.5)

Table 11.2.5. Known natural communities of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Community Type ^a	System ^b	State Rank ^c	Source ^d
Saline/Brackish Flats	E	S3	1
Maritime Beach Strand	T	S3	1
Maritime Dune	T	S2	1
Gravel/Sand Beach	E	S4	1
Salt Marsh	E	S3	2

a. Classified according to Swain and Kearsley (2011).

b. E = Estuarine, P = Palustrine, T = Terrestrial.

c. The NHESP ranks communities from most rare (S1) to the most common (S5).

d. Information contained in this table was obtained from the following sources:

1. RMP Planner.
2. DEP Wetlands (1:12,000) data layer.

A portion of the upland area between the State highway and Sengekontacket Pond has sparse stands of eastern red cedar that resemble a Maritime Juniper Woodland/Shrubland. However, the

presence of this S1 community type has not been confirmed.

Forests

Only 2.09% of the park is classified as forested.

Wildlife

No formal surveys have been conducted; as a result, there is little information specific to Sylvia. However, some information on the park's wildlife may be inferred from wildlife observed in nearby uplands and waters.

As of March, 2015, 136 species of birds were reported for Mass Audubon's Felix Neck Sanctuary, on the western shore of Sengekontacket Pond (eBird). Although many of the songbirds observed at Felix Neck likely don't occur at Sylvia, due to differences in vegetation, the herons, gulls, shorebirds, and waterfowl reported reflect both locations.

Fish in Sengekontacket Pond include silversides, sand eels, cunner, tautog, sea robin, toadfish, scaup, eels, bluefish, striped bass, and summer and winter flounder (MassHighway 1997). The pond is a "rich, productive habitat" for shellfish including bay scallops, soft-shell clams, and quahogs (MassHighway 1997). In 2013 the towns of Edgartown and Oak Bluffs established an oyster propagation program for the dual purposes of oyster production and nitrogen reduction in the pond's waters (Brown 2013). Surf clams and northern lobster occur offshore.

11.3. CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section describes the known and potential cultural resource areas, including pre-Contact and post-Contact archaeological resources, and historic landscapes, buildings, structures, and objects. An overview of significant events in the history of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach is presented in Table 11.3.1. The beach's cultural resources are identified in Table 11.3.2.

Table 11.3.1. Significant events in the history of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Year(s)	Events
1946	Initial acquisition of a State Beach began with the Commissioner of Conservation receiving authorization to “take by eminent domain...or acquire by purchase or otherwise” approximately 100 acres of land in Edgartown and Oak Bluffs at a maximum cost of \$38,000.
1947	additional land acquisitions authorized using balance of \$38,000. (Chapter 642 of the Acts of 1947)
1954	Sylvia state beach expanded, with the addition of 52 acres in Edgartown. Ownership goes to the state and management to the county. (Chapter 631 of the Acts of 1954)
1968	State Beach in the towns of Oak Bluffs and Edgartown is designated the Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach in honor of a former member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. (Chapter 150 of the Acts of 1968)
1971	Commissioners of the County of Dukes County are authorized to establish rules and regulations relative to the care and maintenance of beaches. (Chapter 161 of the Acts of 1971)
1974	Eight foot-wide multi-use path constructed through park.
1991-1992	Winter storms damage section of the State highway through park; emergency repairs are implemented.
1997	Three wooden groins constructed south of existing stone groins in order to mitigate ongoing erosion.

Table 11.3.2. Cultural resources of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Resource	Type ^a	Date ^b	Condition ^c	Integrity ^d	In Use ^e	Utilities ^f	MHC # ^g	Guidance ^h
Oak Bluffs								
Nantucket Sound	NRDOE	-	-	-	-	-	OAK.902	-
Groin – Stone (4)	ST	1954	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>Additional Resourcesⁱ</i>								
Farm Pond – South Culvert ^j	ST	Late 19 th c.	-	-	-	-	-	1

a. Resource types include the following: AR = Archaeological; BU = Building; LA = Landscape; NRDOE = National Register Determination of Eligibility; NRHD = National Register Historic District; OB = Object; and ST = Structure.

b. Date of construction provided, when known.

c. Preliminary condition assessment using the building system and equipment condition codes as used in the Massachusetts Capital Asset management Information System (CAMIS). The following codes are used: 1 = Excellent-easily restorable to like new condition; 2 = Good-routine maintenance required; 3 = Adequate-some corrective and preventative maintenance required; 4 = Fair-excessive corrective maintenance and repair required; 5 = Poor-renovation needed; and 6 = Fail.

d. Integrity is a relative assessment of the condition of a resource’s retention of its historic character-defining features; H = High; L = Low; M = Medium; and U = Unknown.

e. Use categories include: N = building is not in use; S = building is used on a seasonal basis; and Y = building is used year-round.

f. The following codes are used to identify utilities associated with buildings: E = Electric, H = Heat; I = Internet; S = Septic system; T = Telephone; W = Water; and W(S) = Water is available on a seasonal basis. This information is included for all buildings.

g. Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory number.

h. The following guidance is offered for the maintenance of these cultural resources.

1. Refer to Historic Landscapes – Built Features BMP (DCR n.d.f).

i. This resource has not yet been field verified or confirmed; Only its eastern end is within the park.

j. A culvert has been at this location since at least 1894. The current culvert is buried in sand.

Archaeological Resources

Although no pre-Contact sites have been recorded within the limits of Sylvia, many are recorded in the immediate vicinity. The high concentrations of pre-Contact sites in this area are along brackish water ponds and date from the Middle Archaic Period through the Contact Period. The types of recorded archaeological sites include burial sites, habitation sites, camp sites, and shell middens. Sylvia state beach has a moderate sensitivity for pre-Contact sites.

Historic Resources

The distinctive shape of Sylvia state beach would be familiar to the Island's native inhabitants as well as its earliest English Settlers. The beach has retained its barrier character despite tidal erosion and the growth of coastal development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Little recorded development and permanent occupation has taken place at the beach over the past centuries and as a result, no extant historic resources can be found today.

The only designated historic resource within or adjacent to the property is Nantucket Sound, which has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Projects at the facility may have to be reviewed for impacts on the Sound. Contact OCR regarding any projects that might impact this resource.



The train between Edgartown and Oak Bluffs once ran the entire length of what is now Sylvia state beach; no traces remain within the park. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

11.4. RECREATION RESOURCES

The park's recreation activities are largely beach dependent, including:

- Boating (ramp partially within park boundaries)
- Fishing, fin fish
- Fishing, shellfish
- Kite boarding
- Kite flying (in season)
- Nature study
- Stand up paddle boarding
- Sunbathing
- Swimming

Sylvia's greatest recreational asset is its beach, which is unguarded. The designated swimming area extends 300 yards from the shore into Nantucket Sound. Water quality is tested monthly during the beach season at three locations: approximately halfway between Little and Big Bridges; Big Bridge; and at Bend in the Road Beach. There have been no exceedances of *Enterococcus* bacteria standards recorded since 2007, the first year for which data are available for all three sampling locations.

A boat ramp is located on the south side of North Inlet; it is partially within the park and partially on town of Oak Bluffs property. A commercial kayak rental business (i.e., Island Spirit Kayaks) operates on town of Oak Bluffs property adjacent to the boat ramp. An associated food concession is believed to be located in the park. There is no DCR or County permit for this commercial activity.

One recreational feature commonly associated with the park is actually not in the park. A multi-use path runs the entire length of the park on the west side of the State highway. This path, which is used for bicycling, walking, and running, is located within the road's right-of-way and not the park.

Although bicycles are a common form of transportation to the park, there are no bike racks. Bicycles are parked along fences, signs, and any vertical surface near Big Bridge; others are lain down on dunes (MVC 2015).



A multi-use path, located on MassDOT property, runs through the park. It is popular with cyclists and runners. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

11.5. INFRASTRUCTURE

Property Boundary

The park's eastern and western boundaries are clearly identifiable by the adjacent bodies of water. Its northern boundary lies near the south side of North Inlet. However, between the inlet and the park is a variable-width strip of land owned by the town of Oak Bluffs. The boundary between the park and the Oak Bluffs parcel is unmarked, making it difficult to determine if commercial activities intended for the Oak Bluffs property are taking place within the park. The park's southern boundary is easily identifiable west of Edgartown-Oak Bluffs Road; it is the north side of the channel between Sengekontacket and Trapps ponds. To the east of the

road the southern boundary is unmarked and indistinguishable from the town of Edgartown's Bend in the Road Beach.

The boundaries of the parcel at 174 Sea View Avenue, Edgartown are uncertain. At the time of its acquisition in 1947, the landward boundary was the road edge and the seaward boundary the "extreme low water" line. Changes to the road bed and shoulder, and to the low water line, may have resulted in shifts in these boundaries.

Buildings and Structures

There are no buildings; structures are limited to groins, boardwalks, and a culvert. Although Sylvia's boardwalks are universally accessible, and some include wheelchair pull off areas, they do not provide access all the way the shore. (Table 11.5.1)



Example of boardwalk at Sylvia state beach; these are constructed and maintained by the County. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

Table 11.5.1. Non-historic buildings and structures of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Location and Infrastructure ^a	Date ^b	Condition ^c	In Use ^d	Utilities ^e
Oak Bluffs				
Boardwalks (3)	1998	3	-	-
Groin – wood (4)	1996	-	-	-
Farm Pond – North Culvert ^f	1992	3	-	-
Edgartown				
Boardwalks (5)	1998	-	-	-

a. Information presented by town.

b. Date of construction provided, when known.

c. Preliminary condition assessment using the building system and equipment condition codes as used in the Massachusetts Capital Asset Management Information System (CAMIS). The following codes are used: 1 = Excellent-easily restorable to like new condition; 2 = Good-routine maintenance required; 3 = Adequate-some corrective and preventative maintenance required; 4 = Fair-excessive corrective maintenance and repair required; 5 = Poor-renovation needed; and 6 = Fail.

d. Use categories include: N = building is not in use; S = building is used on a seasonal basis; and Y = building is used year-round.

e. The following codes are used to identify utilities associated with buildings: E = Electric; H = Heat; I = Internet; S = Septic system; T = Telephone; W = Water; and W(S) = Water is available on a seasonal basis. This information is included for all buildings.

f. Only a portion of this resource is within the park.

A 71 inch by 41 inch aluminum culvert (i.e., the north culvert) connects Farm Pond to Nantucket Sound. (Table 11.5.1) Its east end is within the park.

Roads

There are no paved roads within the park. (Table 11.5.2) The State Highway runs north-south through the center of the park, on land owned by MassDOT. In 2005, the most recent year for which data are available, this road had an average daily summer traffic volume of 7,007 vehicles (<http://www.mvcommission.org/>).

Table 11.5.2. Condition and length of roads at Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.^a

Road Condition	Paved (Miles)	Unpaved (Miles)
Good	0.00	0.03
Fair	0.00	0.11
Poor	0.00	0.0
Total	0.00	0.14

a. Based on field assessment; all distances calculated using GIS.

Licensed shell fisherman may drive along the shoreline of Sengekontacket Pond; it is accessed via three dirt roads to the west of the State Highway. (Table 11.5.2) Regulations governing vehicle access by shell fisherman may be found in the Beach Rules and Regulations for Joseph Sylvia State Beach. (http://www.dukescounty.org/Pages/DukesCountyMA_NaturalResources/sylvia%20rules)

Parking

Most parking takes place along the shoulder of Edgartown-Oak Bluffs Road. There are also two off road parking areas. The first is a formal parking lot adjacent to Little Bridge, and the second is an informal lot at the northwest corner of Big Bridge. There is no employee parking. Public transportation is available.

Table 11.5.3. Number of public parking spaces, by location and type, at Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Location	HP	Other	Total
North Inlet-Little Bridge ^a	0	49	49
Edgartown-Oak Bluffs Road-Oak Bluffs-marked spaces ^b	7	0	7
Edgartown-Oak Bluffs Road - Oak Bluffs-parallel parking ^c	0	218	218
South Inlet – Big Bridge	0	12	12
Edgartown-Oak Bluffs Road-Edgartown-parallel parking ^c	3	155	158
Total	10	434	444

a. This is the only lot on DCR property. The number of spaces is based on the number of potential 9-foot-wide spaces.

b. There are 22 marked HP spaces. However, 15 are reserved for Camp Jabberwocky and are unavailable to members of the public with HP plates or placards.

c. Number of spaces based on the number of potential 8 by 24-foot parallel spaces.



Parking area at North Inlet – Little Bridge. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

Trails

A series of trails extend from the road eastward to Nantucket Sound; eight have boardwalks for all or a portion of their length. Several trails have sharp drop-offs from the pavement edge, creating a large step (MVC 2015). The condition and extent of these trails are identified in Table 11.5.4.

Table 11.5.4. Condition and length of official trails at Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Trail Condition	Length (Miles)
Good	1.57
Fair	0.00
Poor	0.00
Total	1.57

Kiosks and Signs

There are no signs that identify the property as a DCR park; only a metal plaque identifies the park. (See Memorials and Markers, below.) There are no kiosks.

Iron Ranger

There is no iron ranger.

Memorials and Markers

A stone marker bearing a metal dedication plaque is located north of Big Bridge. There are no other known markers.



This stone marker and metal plaque are the only indicators of the park's name or ownership. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

11.6. INTERPRETATION

There is no formal interpretive programming by the DCR or County. The Friends of Sengekontacket Pond (FOS) sponsors "Saturdays on the Sengekontacket," an interpretive program for children four and up, led by a Mass Audubon naturalist. These one hour programs are conducted on Saturday mornings in July and August.

There are two interpretive signs, they are:

- Caution: Endangered Birds Ahead
- What is a Barrier Beach?

The former is a DCR interpretive panel located adjacent to the Joseph A. Sylvia marker and plaque. The second is a two-panel sign located at the southern edge of the parking lot at North Inlet; it was constructed by MassDOT. This sign is currently in

need of maintenance and the information presented needs updating.



MassDOT interpretive sign located at the entrance to the North Inlet parking area. (See Appendix G for photo information.)

11.7. MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

Staffing

DCR Personnel

The Forest and Park Supervisor III at Correllus serves as the point of contact with the County of Dukes County for issues related to the management of Sylvia.

Partnerships and Volunteers

The Dukes County Natural Resources Department is responsible for the management of this park.

The FOS is a non-profit organization "dedicated to the preservation of Sengekontacket Pond and the barrier beach." Among their objectives are to: initiate, support, and fund research and activities that will benefit the Sengekontacket Pond system and Joseph Sylvia state beach; and collaborate with watershed residents, recreational and commercial pond and beach users, and all levels of government in developing and implementing conservation strategies for the protection of Sengekontacket and Trapp's ponds and Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach. The FOS is a partner to the County of Dukes County. They conduct annual spring beach cleanups at Sylvia and participate in the Barrier Beach Task Force (BBTF).

The BBTF seeks "a balance between the need to maintain Beach Road and the need to preserve as healthy ecosystems, the Joseph Sylvia state beach

and Sengekontacket Pond.” They “work to bring together all the various interests to formulate a practical, affordable, environmentally sound management plan for the barrier beach.” The BBTF is co-chaired by the County Manager and an FOS Advisory Board member; it is composed of members from the towns of Oak Bluffs and Edgartown, County Officials, MassDOT; state and federal environmental agencies, FOS, Senior Environmental Corps, and DCR. The BBTF helped bring about the Beach Management Plan for Sylvia State Beach (Woods Hole Group, Inc., 2008).

Public Safety

The Oak Bluffs and Edgartown Fire Departments provide fire response and emergency services. Law enforcement is provided by municipal police departments and the Massachusetts State Police.

Park rules are enforced by the Dukes County Sheriff’s Department.

Funding

Conservation Trust Fund

There are no Conservation Trust Funds.

Retained Revenue

This property does not generate revenues.

Other Revenues

The DCR’s Waterways Program provides an annual grant of \$30,000 to the County for projects such as beach nourishment, dune restoration, and universal access

(http://www.dukescounty.org/Pages/DukesCountyMA_NaturalResources/Sylvia).

11.8. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The park that is now Sylvia state beach, including the 174 Sea View Avenue parcel, was acquired through three Acts of the Legislature (i.e., Chapter 510 of the Acts of 1946, Chapter 642 of the Acts of 1947, and Chapter 631 of the Acts of 1954. The first and last of these acts specified management responsibilities as follows:

“The county commissioners of the County of Dukes County are hereby authorized and directed to manage and maintain the property acquired hereunder, and the cost of

said management and maintenance shall be borne by said county.”

There is no additional management guidance, and no agreements between the DCR and the County. The Acts are silent about such issues as whether or not the County has the authority to regulate commercial enterprises (e.g., concessions). This is an issue of increasing importance to the County as it is looking for sources of revenue to help offset the costs of park operations and maintenance.

The DCR only has one agreement pertaining to the management of this property (Table 11.8.1).

Table 11.8.1. Key legal agreements for Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Party and Subject of Agreement	Type ^a	Expiration Date ^b
Massachusetts Highway Department (i.e., MassDOT) Barrier beach sign, Beach Road, Oak Bluffs.	U	N/A
a. Agreement types include: A=Memorandum of Agreement; E=Easement; L=Lease; and U=Memorandum of Understanding.		
b. Year that agreement expires. Permanent agreements are indicated by an expiration date of “None.”		

Because Sylvia is not directly managed by the DCR, little DCR guidance has been developed for the management of this property. (Table 11.8.2)

Table 11.8.2. Key management and guidance documents for Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Author and Document	Year
Gannett Fleming, Inc. Environmental audit report: Joseph Sylvia state reservation (sic), Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts.	1998i

A beach management plan was developed for the County by Woods Hole Group, Inc. (2008). This plan covers planning, monitoring, routine maintenance, restoration, and education and outreach activities. It serves as the main guidance document for Sylvia.

The County has developed rules and regulations for Sylvia state beach. (See http://www.dukescounty.org/pages/dukescountyma_naturalresources/sylvia.)

Annual Maintenance

Because this park is managed by the County of Dukes County, there is no DCR annual maintenance schedule.

Natural Resources

Water Resources

The towns of Edgartown and Oak Bluffs are jointly performing a 10-year comprehensive maintenance dredge and beach nourishment project (EEA Project No. 14425). Between 2009 and 2019, the towns will dredge up to 78,000 cubic yards of soils from Sengekontacket Pond and deposit it at the following three locations: Sylvia state beach, between North and South inlets; Bend in the Road Beach; and on privately owned dunes east of Bend in the Road Beach.

The town of Oak Bluffs maintains the channel beneath Little Bridge. Dredging is planned for 2015.

Although a current beach management plan exists (Woods Hole Group, Inc. 2008), it is not consistent with Executive Order (E.O.) Number 181. Under this Executive Order, management plans must be developed for all “state-owned barrier beach property.” They must be consistent with state wetland policy and undergo review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). Although the plan is consistent with state wetland policy, it did not undergo MEPA review. Because of this, a management plan for Sylvia is still required under E.O. 181.

Rare Species

State-listed shorebirds are monitored and managed by the Massachusetts Audubon Society under a system-wide agreement between that organization and the DCR. This agreement is used for similar activities elsewhere in the Nickerson Management Complex.

Areas used by rare beach-nesting birds are off-limits April 1–August 31, or until the nesting season ends.

Invasive Species

The BBTF monitors spotted knapweed; experimental control began in 2014.

Vegetation

In 2013, the County with the aid of volunteers planted 20,000 square feet of American beach grass, rugosa rose, and beach plum to stabilize dredge spoils placed on the beach. Additional planting of beach grass occurs on an as needed basis in areas overwashed by winter storms or damaged by vehicles.

The Acts of the Legislature that created and expanded Sylvia include a provision that the County may not make rules or regulations to “prohibit farmers from taking...kelp...or from operating vehicles thereon for the purpose of removing seaweed” (Chapter 510 of the Acts of 1946 and Chapter 631 of the Acts of 1954).

Cultural Resources

There are no cultural resource management practices unique to this property.

Recreation Resources

Recreation activities are solely managed by the County of Dukes County. The County has promulgated beach regulations and established a permitting system for parties and other special events. The most current version of this information is available on its web page (http://www.dukescounty.org/pages/dukescountyma_naturalresources/sylvia).

Kite flying and kite boarding are prohibited April 1–August 31; dogs and other pets are also prohibited from the beach during this period.

Infrastructure

Buildings and Structures

The County, with the assistance of volunteers, maintains the boardwalks.

The north culvert at Farm Pond is scheduled to be replaced by two 8 foot culverts to improve tidal flow; the town of Oak Bluffs is the proponent of this project (CLE Engineering, Inc. 2011).

Roads

Maintenance of Edgartown-Oak Bluffs Road is the responsibility of MassDOT.

MassDOT holds easements on portions of the park. Immediately south of Little Bridge, they hold easements on 1,784 ft² on the ocean side (Lot 2-TE-9) and 5,236 ft² on the pond side (Lot 2-TE-10) of Beach Road. South of Big Bridge, they hold easements on 898 ft² on the ocean side (Lot 1-TE-3) and 948 ft² on the pond side (Lot 1-TE-4) of Beach Road. Refer to Highway Layouts No. 8053 and No. 7910, respectively, for additional information on these easements. It is unknown if MassDOT holds additional easements in the park.

Parking Areas

Maintenance of the North Inlet-Little Bridge parking lot is the responsibility of the County. The remaining parking spaces are located on MassDOT property.

Trails

Trails to the beach are maintained by the County with the assistance of volunteers.

Maintenance of the multi-use path, which is located on MassDOT property, is the responsibility of that agency.

Kiosks and Signs

There is no kiosk to update. Maintenance of the Barrier Beach interpretive sign is the responsibility of MassDOT.

11.9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This section provides recommendations for the near- and long-term management of Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach. Applied Land Stewardship Zoning recommendations provide general guidance for managing Sylvia. Future DCR activities and projects should be checked against the zoning map (Figure 11.2) for consistency. Management recommendations for Sylvia are all high-priority, and should be addressed as soon as resources become available.

Applied Land Stewardship Zoning (Figure 11.2)

The following Land Stewardship Zoning is recommended for Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach. It is included for consistency among properties and among the Sections of this RMP. However, because stewardship of Sylvia is the responsibility of the County of Dukes County, the applicability of these recommendations to management is at the County's discretion.

Zone 1

The following sections of Sylvia have been designated Zone 1.

- Barrier beaches Ob-1 and Et-1.
- All salt marsh.

Zone 2

- Two small upland areas located in the southwest section of the park are designated Zone 2.

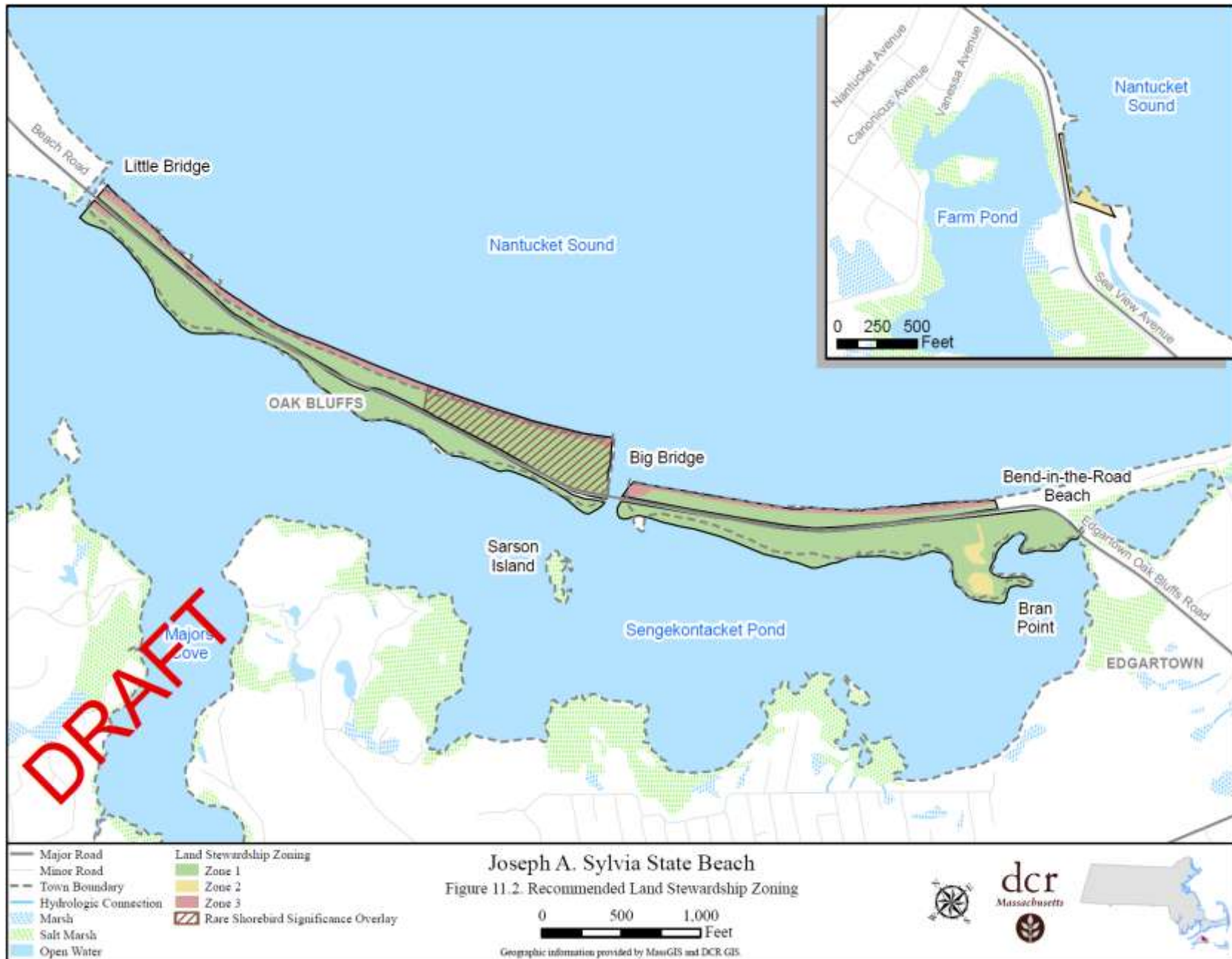
Zone 3

- The North Inlet – Little Bridge parking lot.
- The beach along Nantucket Sound, from the foredune to the low tide line. This area is intensively used for swimming and sunbathing.

Significant Feature Overlay

The following Significant Feature Overlay was developed to protect state listed beach-nesting birds.

- ***Rare Shorebird Significance Overlay***, with NHESP management guidelines. This overlay covers piping plover nesting and foraging areas, and common and least tern nesting areas. Beach and dune closures within this overlay area may occur as needed and may expand or contract over time to protect resources.



Management Recommendations

Four priority management recommendations were developed for Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach. (Table 11.9.1) For a recommendation to be considered priority it must address one or more of the following criteria:

- Regulatory compliance or compliance with legal agreements.
- Threats to the health and safety of park visitors and employees.

- The imminent loss of a natural, cultural, or recreation resource.

Additional maintenance and management needs observed during the preparation of this RMP, but not meeting one or more of the above criteria, are not included in this plan.

All recommendations are of equal priority.

Table 11.9.1. Priority recommendations for Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach.

Recommendation	Implementation ^a
Work with the Barrier Beach Task Force to ensure that future versions of the beach management plan meet the review requirements of Executive Order No. 181.	P, R, X
Continue ongoing rare shorebird monitoring and management activities.	P, R
Survey the park's north boundary and establish permanent bounds to ensure that concessions permitted for outside the park are not situated in the park.	C, E
Work with the County of Dukes County to clarify issues regarding concessions in the park.	L

- a. The following codes identify the party or parties responsible for implementing the recommendations: B = Bureau of Ranger Services; C = Contractor; E = Division of Engineering; F = Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry; L = Legal Services; O = Other; P = Bureau of Planning, Design & Resource Protection; R = Regional and district staff; U = Universal Access Program; V = Volunteer or partner; and X = Office of External Affairs and Partnerships.

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